

BEYOND THE INITIALS

The Real Life of Dorothy Canfield Fisher

A Quick Timeline

1879: Dorothy born in Lawrence, Kansas.

1890: Dorothy goes to France for the first time.

1891: Fisher family moves to Lincoln, Nebraska.

1895: Fisher family relocates to Columbus, Ohio.

1899: Dorothy graduates from Ohio State University.

1904: Dorothy graduates with a PhD from Columbia University.

1907: Dorothy weds John Fisher and moves to Arlington, Vermont.

1909: Dorothy gives birth to a daughter, Sally.

1913: Dorothy gives birth to a second child, James.

1916: Dorothy travels to France with her children where her husband is doing relief work for the war.

1918: Fisher family goes back to Arlington, Vermont.



Introduction

The Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award has been around since 1957, making it the 2nd oldest children-selected book award in the country and an award that is very well established in the state of Vermont. Committee members work hard to choose books that kids will love, and they have always done an excellent job; this is why kids look forward to the new list every year.

However, since the award is so old and Dorothy has long since passed, her connection to the book award is only in name, for most kids. Students have not been exposed to Dorothy's legacy in Vermont and her many works. Patty even remembers a student asking if Dorothy was the *author* of all the nominated books!

Considering all of this, we decided to present a workshop that would bring Dorothy Canfield Fisher to life. You can use these tools to help your students make the connection between the award, the nominees, and the wonderful woman for whom the award is named. Thank you for joining us!

A Quick Timeline

1921: Dorothy is the first female voted to serve on the Vermont State Board of education.

1926: Dorothy begins her tenure on the Book-of-the-Month Club Committee of Selection.

1930: Flavia passes away.

1933: Sally marries.

1935: James marries.

1939-1940: Dorothy develops Children's Crusade for Children.

1943: John has a heart attack.

1945: James dies in the Philippines.

1951: Dorothy ends her tenure on the Book-of-the-Month Club and receives the Lindsay Skinner Award from Women's National Book Association.

1953: Dorothy gives her personal papers to the University of Vermont; she has a stroke at the end of the year.

1957: Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award is established in Vermont.

1958: Dorothy passes away due to a stroke.

1959: Jon passes away.

Timeline adapted from *Madigan's Keeping Fires Night and Day*, pages xvii-xx.

Activity Links

Activity Link #1:

Genealogy & Family History

- Family Tree Kids! — <http://kids.familytreemagazine.com/kids/default.asp> — Wealth of tools & ideas for genealogy projects.
Genealogy for Kids — https://www.sos.wa.gov/_assets/library/Genealogy%20for%20Kids.pdf — The Washington State Library provides several resources for genealogy resources and projects.
- Storykeepers with Natalie Kinsey-Warnock — <http://storykeepersinourschools.com> — Author and historian Natalie Kinsey-Warnock has created a three-day program and curriculum for teaching students about their family histories.

Historical Storytelling

- History Pin — <http://historypin.org> — Collections of historical photographs of places all over the world
- Hstory — <http://hstry.co> — Students can create timelines of people's lives and of events and share them with teachers and classmates.
- My Histro — <http://myhistro.com> — Students create visual histories using photos, maps, and text.

History of Vermont, History of Arlington

- Vermont History Explorer — <http://vermonthistory.org/explorer> — Vermont history presented in a kid-friendly format!
- Norman Rockwell Museum — https://www.nrm.org/pdfs/teacher_resource.pdf — Activities to do with children that teach about the famous artist and Arlington resident!

Activity Link #2:

Paris in the 1890s: La Belle Époque

Do your own research about this period of the 19th century:

- <http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/1998/5.html>
- http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ampa/hd_ampa.htm
- <http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ConspectusH/id/319>

and then after the lesson, invite your students to create their own gallery of La Belle Époque using Google Slides, Prezi, or PowerPoint and images from the Web Gallery of Art (<http://www.wga.hu>)

Friendship with Willa Cather

Read "The Profile" (free at http://manybooks.net/titles/catherwiother10The_Profile.html) & Dorothy's letter to Willa about the story and have students debate both sides of the argument!

A Selection of Dorothy's Published Works

1907

-Gunhild

1912

-A Montessori Mother

-The Squirrel-Cage

1914

-Mothers and Children

1915

-Hillsboro People

-The Bent Twig

1917

-Understood Betsy

1919

-The Day of Glory

1924

-The Home-Maker

1927

-Why Stop Learning?

1940

-Seasoned Timber

1957

-Memories of Arlington,
Vermont

**Timeline adapted from
Madigan's Keeping Fires Night
and Day, pages xvii-xx.**

Activity Links

Activity Link #3:

Books for the Blind

Introduce Dorothy's work with the blind in France during WWI and then invite students to write poems about this time. Focusing on other senses other than sight and using a wide variety of poetic forms (haiku, acrostic, etc.) would be a great way to integrate the two units.

Children's Crusade for Children

Create a program (coin war, etc.) where students collect pennies for a cause in the community. Students could also do research on one of the people who worked with Mrs. Fisher on this project and do a collage about them. Try this great site for making collages online: <http://www.fotor.com>.

Activity Link #4:

Dorothy's Mad-Lib History

Use the provided hand-out with a passage describing Dorothy's life to create a Mad-Lib for your students! Make sure you students do the Mad-Lib first before finding out the "correct" answers from the passage. You can also do this with a passage from one of Dorothy's works!

You can also do this with transcriptions from the Green Mountain Radio show and oral histories about her found at: <http://vermonthistory.org/research/research-resources-online/green-mountain-chronicles/dorothy-canfield-fisher-1907>.

Dorothy's Famous Friends

Use Mark Madigan's book "Keeping Fires Night and Day" and choose several of Dorothy's letters to famous personages to analyze. You can also have students write their own letters to their favorite authors or Dorothy herself. You can use the Letters about Literature program as a model: http://libraries.vermont.gov/services/children_and_teens/lal.

Captions for Photos from the Bailey-Howe Library

Have students write their own captions for the photos we have provided from the Bailey-Howe Library (or find them online at) and display them in the hallway. You can also have them create their own multi-media presentation!

Bibliography

- Dorothy Canfield Fisher: A Biography by Ida H. Washington. The New England Press, 1982.
- Keeping Fires Night and Day: Selected Letters of Dorothy Canfield Fisher edited by Mark J. Madigan. University of Missouri Press, 1993.

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